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# City of Cambridge Police Department

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Robert W. Healy  
City Manager

February 17, 2011

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City Manager

Re: City Council Order No. 2 dated February 7, 2011

Dear Sir:

As requested I am responding to the above City Council Order regarding a shooting incident which occurred on Clifton Street on January 27<sup>th</sup>. I will address each of the four concerns listed in the request: 1) How we handled communications in the aftermath of this incident; 2) Why no alert was sent out; 3) How outreach was done for the community meeting; and 4) What plans are in place to keep future shootings from happening in this area.

**1. How the police department handled communications in the aftermath of this incident.**

In the immediate aftermath of the gunshots fired on Clifton Street at 7:59 PM on the night of Thursday, January 27<sup>th</sup>, the following steps were taken by the Cambridge Police Department:

- Deputy DeMarco, Duty Chief the night of the incident, coordinated the initial response efforts to Clifton Street and gave an update to the PD Command Staff at 8:23 PM.
- Dan Riviello, Communications Specialist, received a call from David Harris of the Cambridge Chronicle at 8:30 PM and responded by providing information that residents called police to report hearing several gunshots and that police were on scene and had recovered shell casings and that there were no reported injuries (this was the only media inquiry received by police).
- Cambridge Police Officers & Detectives on scene canvassed the neighborhood and spoke to over 50 residents, witnesses, and bystanders the night of the incident. Police provided residents with information and interviewed those who witnessed the incident or had other helpful information.

- Commissioner Haas informed the City Manager of the incident via e-mail at 11:02 PM.
- The City Manager informed City Councilors via e-mail at 1:36 AM.
- A short description of the incident was available via the Daily Public Log of police activity on the department's website on the morning of Friday, January 28<sup>th</sup>.
- A description of the event was included in the January edition of BridgeStat, released to the public and posted on the department's website on Friday, February 4<sup>th</sup> at [http://www2.cambridgema.gov/CityOfCambridge\\_Content/documents/BridgeStat\\_January2011\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www2.cambridgema.gov/CityOfCambridge_Content/documents/BridgeStat_January2011_FINAL.pdf).

## 2. **Why no alert was sent out.**

The criteria for when the Cambridge Police Department sends out Citizen Alerts to those subscribed to the service were as follows:

- Alerts are sent via the Citizen Observer service when a noteworthy/newsworthy event occurs in the City where there is a victim(s) of crime and police believe that there is an ongoing public safety risk that residents should be aware of. An example of this would be the violent home invasion on Pearl Street last year where an alert was sent out to inform citizens about the event while the perpetrator was still on the loose.
- Alerts are sent via the Citizen Observer service when police identify a pattern that affects a particular area of the City or the community at large that puts citizens at risk. An example of this would be the string of street robberies that took place across the city this fall for which an alert was sent out to warn citizens.

In terms of the Clifton Street incident, Cambridge Police investigators did not believe this was a random incident by any means and therefore we did not anticipate an ongoing public safety threat that warranted sending an alert to citizens. Also, when incidents occur where no victim has been identified and we are still actively investigating and do not want to speculate about what may or may not have occurred, an alert is typically not sent.

Understanding the nature of the incident on Clifton Street and the alarm that it caused residents, Cambridge Police are reviewing our Citizen Alert policy after receiving valuable feedback from residents who would like to receive more information about events like this in the future.

## 3. **How outreach was done for the community meeting.**

After the North Cambridge Neighborhood Sergeants Meeting was scheduled for the night Tuesday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, the Cambridge Police Department performed outreach by:

- Holly Bernier, Neighborhood Coordinator, sent out a notice to a list of North Cambridge residents via e-mail.

- Dan Riviello, Communications Specialist, sent an announcement via Citizen Observer to those subscribed to the North Cambridge neighborhood.
- An event and announcement were posted on the Cambridge Police Department's Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/CambridgePolice](http://www.facebook.com/CambridgePolice).
- An announcement was posted on the Cambridge Police Department's Twitter feed at [www.twitter.com/CambridgePolice](http://www.twitter.com/CambridgePolice).
- An event was posted on the Cambridge Police Department's calendar at <http://www2.cambridgema.gov/CPD/Calendar/calendar.cfm#February8>.
- An event was posted on CCTV's Community Calendar at <http://www.cctvcambridge.org/node/71350>.
- An announcement was posted on the Cambridge Police Department's homepage under News & Events at [http://www2.cambridgema.gov/CityOfCambridge\\_Content/documents/PressRelease\\_NorthCambridgeMeeting\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www2.cambridgema.gov/CityOfCambridge_Content/documents/PressRelease_NorthCambridgeMeeting_FINAL.pdf)

#### **4) What plans are in place to keep future shootings from happening in this area?**

##### **Summary of Recent Shooting Incidents**

Over the course of the last year and a half there have been 6 incidents of shootings / gunshots in the North Cambridge Neighborhood. Two of these incidents resulted in an arrest; two are awaiting action / results from the District Attorney or State Police Crime Lab; one is still actively being investigated; and the most recent incident is being actively investigated by the Cambridge Police Department. Following is a summary of each incident:

##### ***6/16/2009 – 364 Rindge Avenue (case referred to District Attorney)***

A 33 year old male from Cambridge, Jason Ellcock, was shot and killed at the entrance to the driveway of 364 Rindge Ave. In conjunction with the Mass State Police and the Middlesex County District Attorney's office a lengthy and thorough investigation was conducted, including dozens of interviews and analysis of a variety of forensic evidence. After all leads were exhausted the Middlesex County District Attorney's Office has suspended the investigation pending the development of any additional information. Although this investigation has been suspended by the District Attorney's Office, detectives from the Criminal Investigation Section of the department are continuing to seek out other investigative leads, and the case still remains an open and active investigation.

##### ***1/29/2010 – 61 Jackson Street (case closed by arrest)***

A 25 year old male from Dorchester was shot while walking near 61 Jackson Street. The

victim said that he was in North Cambridge to purchase cocaine. Three weeks later on 2/18/2010 police in Cambridge arrested Justin Grady of 364 Rindge Ave and Lawz LePenn of Haverhill for drug possession (with the intent to distribute) and firearm possession. Both were subsequently indicted for the January shooting and remain incarcerated awaiting trial.

**4/3/2010 – Jefferson Park (*case presented to DA*)**

A 32 year old male from Cambridge was shot in Jefferson Park. Victim transported himself to the hospital, told police the shooting occurred in another city, and refused to cooperate with the investigation. Despite an uncooperative victim, police conducted a comprehensive investigation, suspects were identified, and evidence was presented to the District Attorney's office for presentment to a Grand Jury.

**4/10/2010 – 51 Clifton Street (*case suspended pending lab results*)**

Shots were fired by a person on foot at a fleeing motor vehicle in front of 51 Clifton Street. Shell casings were recovered from the scene and submitted for forensic analysis – results have not yet been returned by the State Police Crime Lab.

**5/13/2010 – 18 Jackson Street (*case closed by arrest*)**

George Deroo fired a gun in the basement of his home. Two handguns were recovered and Deroo was arrested and charged with illegal possession of handguns.

**1/27/2011 – Clifton Street and Dudley Street (*case is being actively investigated*)**

Gunshots were exchanged between a person on the sidewalk on Clifton Street and the passenger of a motor vehicle described as a 2000 – 2003 gold Nissan Maxima. No injuries were reported and no victims have come forward. The case remains under active investigation currently.

**As the status of the investigations and or cases progress, the department will continue to update the community on the status through our various communication tools.**

**Police Response Plan**

The Cambridge Police Department recognizes that recent gun violence in North Cambridge has traumatized residents, particularly those living in the residential neighborhood of Clifton, Dudley, and Jackson Streets. Because of this violence, and the actions of some of the individuals who may be involved, a climate has developed where residents feel unsafe and are reluctant to contact the police for fear of retribution. The disruption in communicating with the police is critical in preserving peace and criminal activity from taking place within the neighborhood. Recognizing this is an essential component to maintaining an active partnership between the neighborhood and the police, the department is continuing to make a

concerted effort that will serve to empower the neighborhood in terms of restoring a sense of safety and wellbeing.

In response to the January 27<sup>th</sup> shooting incident, the Cambridge Police Department initiated an immediate response to address the problem, which is outlined below. In addition, a long term strategic plan to combat violence in North Cambridge is currently being developed and is also discussed below.

### **Immediate Response Plan**

Following is a summary of the Cambridge Police Department's response to the recent shooting incident and feedback received from residents during the February 8<sup>th</sup> community meeting. Please bear in mind that the investigation into the recent incident that occurred on Clifton Street is still a very active investigation. There may be certain details of our response that we will not reveal at this time due to the risk of compromising the investigation or the safety of the public and the police.

- Uniformed police patrols were immediately increased in the area of Clifton Street and Dudley Street and will continue for the foreseeable future.
- A significant amount of investigative resources have been allocated to follow up on this shooting incident even though a victim has not been identified. The Cambridge Police Department recognizes the impact to the neighborhood as a result of in this incident, and is viewed as critically important to focus on.
- The neighborhood walking officers assigned to North Cambridge have been instructed to maintain a visible presence in the area of Clifton Street and Dudley Street when they are not handling a call for service. *As has been the case for many years, there are two officers who are permanently assigned to walk the North Cambridge neighborhood (primarily the area encompassed by Rindge Ave, Cedar St, Harvey Street and also the Fresh Pond Apartments, Jefferson Park, and Jackson Circle). This assignment is filled seven days a week on the evening shift (which is generally 4pm – 12am, but on weekend nights in the summer months officers work from 6pm – 2am).*
- Covert and overt patrols and surveillance by plainclothes detectives from the Criminal Investigations Section, the Youth and Family Services Unit, and the Special Investigations Unit continue to be conducted.

The Traffic Enforcement Unit has been assigned to increase enforcement of motor vehicle violations on the residential streets off of Rindge Avenue.

- Deputy Superintendent Albert has been in communication with the Department of Public Works to address the issue of paving on Jackson Street. Due to the condition of the street, DPW has placed this street on the list for road repair in the upcoming months.

The immediate response plan implemented by the Cambridge Police Department has developed many valuable investigative leads **and has already resulted in a significant drug trafficking arrest.**

### **Long Term Response Plan**

A long term strategic plan is required to create an effective and sustainable reduction in crime and sense of a safe community in North Cambridge. Critical to the development and implementation of this plan is a significant commitment from the police department and the city, and input and participation from the community. The City of Cambridge and the Cambridge Police Department are committed to allocating the resources required to engage the community and develop a partnership that will lead to success.

Some of the many issues / goals that may be addressed in a long term plan include:

- Creation of strategies to identify and develop information about who may be involved in violent crime and why they may be committing these crimes.
- Assessing any potential environmental design, geographic, lighting, infrastructure, traffic patterns, or other factors that may contribute to the occurrence of crime.
- Examine challenges that may exist to effective communication with some of the North Cambridge community.
- Development of a two-way communications plan to ensure that: 1) residents are able to utilize several different means to easily provide police with concerns of crime and disorder in a safe and timely manner; and 2) that residents can receive follow up to information they provide and other timely alerts and information from the police department.
- Continue to work closely with the Cambridge Housing Authority and strengthen relationships with local landlords to ensure compliance with various regulations and laws, increase reporting of nuisance issues that may help eventually address or prevent more significant problems, and to enhance a sense that property owners and managers are an integral part of the community. In addition, the Cambridge Police Department will continue to host North Cambridge Housing meetings with various managers of all property in and around the North Cambridge area. These meetings have been valuable in planning events in the neighborhoods, discussions to address concerns and collaboration on improving the quality of life for these residents.

A long term plan to address violent crime in North Cambridge will be the major topic of discussion at the police department's next BridgeStat meeting. Details of this meeting will be included in the next monthly release of BridgeStat scheduled to be available on our website on the first Friday of every month (March 4<sup>th</sup>). In addition to our website and social media platforms ([www.twitter.com/CambridgePolice](https://www.twitter.com/CambridgePolice) and [www.facebook.com/CambridgePolice](https://www.facebook.com/CambridgePolice)), the police department will solicit further input from and provide updated information to the community

using neighborhood / community meetings and contacts, through City Councilors, and the Citizen Observer / Alert system. In addition, the department will continue to work on and assess an immediate sustainable plan to increase safety in the area.

Should you require additional information please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert C. Haas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" being more prominent and the last name "Haas" following in a similar style.

Robert C. Haas  
Police Commissioner

RCH/bk